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Near East and South Asia Review

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Supplement
15 March 1985

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**Near East and
South Asia Review** [redacted]

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Articles

The Yemens: Military Developments Along the Border [redacted]

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The discovery of oil in the eastern part of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) near the poorly demarcated border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) has sparked a local military buildup by the two countries, and, if tensions escalate, both sides could turn to the Soviet Union for assistance and draw Saudi Arabia into the conflict. [redacted]

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Afghanistan: The War in Konarha Province, 1978-84 [redacted]

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Control of Konarha Province has seesawed between the insurgents and the Afghan regime, but, since 1980, increasing insurgent effectiveness and a declining Soviet effort have left the government with only a few more posts than it held at the time of the Soviet invasion. [redacted]

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Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views. Comments may be directed to the authors. [redacted]

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Articles

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The Yemens: Military Developments Along the Border

The discovery of oil in the eastern part of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) near the poorly demarcated border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) has sparked a military buildup in the area by the two countries. Since mid-1984 both sides have deployed significant portions of their respective armies—at least eight brigades are now in the area—and a border clash occurred in January 1985. North Yemen is determined to hold the high ground in the area, and any effort to dislodge its units would result in heavy fighting, in our view. If further incidents occur and escalate significantly, both sides could turn to the Soviet Union for increased military assistance, and Saudi Arabia could be drawn into the conflict.

The ill-defined borders between North Yemen, South Yemen, and Saudi Arabia come together east of Ma'rib, with various points claimed by all three countries. The terrain is flat desert and populated by bedouin tribes and smugglers. The only defensible terrain in the area is around Jabal Thaniyah, approximately 130 kilometers east of Ma'rib.

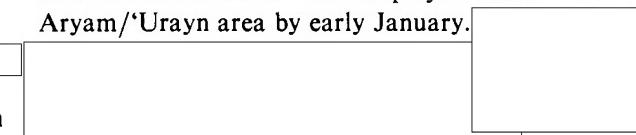
The Buildup

During the summer of 1984, Sanaa reinforced the three North Yemeni brigades normally deployed near Ma'rib and moved elements of at least two additional brigades into the area. It now has five of its 17 brigades deployed there [redacted] and antiaircraft sites have been constructed near some of the drilling sites.



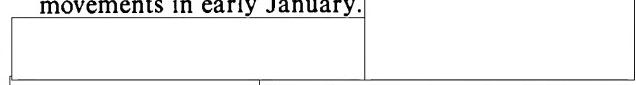
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Additional elements of the two South Yemeni brigades—including mechanized infantry, artillery, and antiaircraft units—were deployed to the Aryam/'Urain area by early January.



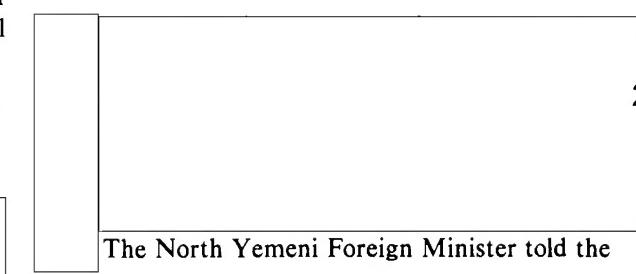
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North Yemen began reacting to the South Yemeni movements in early January.



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[redacted] Attache reporting also indicated that North Yemeni F-5 fighters were armed and put on alert at Sanaa.



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The North Yemeni Foreign Minister told the



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Oil Concession and Boundary Disputes

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US Embassy that North Yemeni units had crossed into South Yemen in response to the South Yemeni buildup and had then withdrawn. The South Yemenis suffered approximately 60 casualties during the clashes [redacted]

Following the incident, shuttle talks began to negotiate a cease-fire. [redacted]

[redacted] substantial forces remained in the area in early March. Elements of at least two South Yemeni brigades, including tank and mechanized infantry units, were deployed in defensive positions near 'Urayn, and artillery units were within range of Al Afalil. [redacted]

additional South Yemeni units, including some from Aden, were moved to locations near the border. North Yemeni infantry and mechanized infantry units remain deployed on Jabal Thaniyah, and they had fortified the area by 28 January, according to imagery. Elements of at least two additional North Yemeni brigades are located approximately 20 kilometers to the north, including a tank battalion and a large infantry force. [redacted]

This incident demonstrates that both sides can deploy substantial forces into this desolate border area. South Yemeni forces, however, appear to have experienced serious equipment and personnel problems during the deployment. Although "brigades" were moving to the border, imagery revealed only portions of battalions and batteries present in the deployment areas, apparently because of maintenance deficiencies.

[redacted]
North Yemenis were more successful in deploying their equipment, in our analysis. At least one tank battalion was deployed with almost all of its 30 tanks, according to imagery. [redacted]

Implications

Significant military forces are likely to remain deployed near Jabal Thaniyah for the indefinite future, and additional clashes could occur with little or no warning, in our view. North Yemen is

determined to retain possession of Jabal Thaniyah to protect its oil drilling sites, and any attempt by either South Yemen or Saudi Arabia to occupy this hill will almost certainly result in heavy fighting. If further incidents occur and escalate significantly, Aden and Sanaa—both heavily armed with Soviet equipment—may turn to the Soviet Union for increased military assistance. [redacted]

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Saudi Arabia probably believes that some of the fighting took place on its territory and will undoubtedly be concerned about future clashes near its borders. [redacted]

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[redacted] In any case, Saudi ground forces are not likely to do well in a major clash with North Yemeni units in defensive positions, in our analysis. If the Saudis become involved in heavy fighting with either North or South Yemen, or if the Soviet Union significantly increases its military support to either country, Riyadh may turn to the United States for political support or increased arms sales. [redacted]

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Afghanistan: The War in Konarha Province, 1978-84

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Insurgents controlled all but a few isolated posts in Konarha Province at the time of the Soviet invasion. Major Soviet operations in the spring of 1980 restored tenuous government control in the Konar valley. Since then, increasing insurgent effectiveness and a declining Soviet effort have left the Afghan Government with only a few more posts than it held at the time of the invasion.

The Province

Difficult terrain has evidently discouraged Soviet or Afghan Government military operations. Only a few narrow valleys cut through the rugged mountains of Konarha Province, where travel is possible only by animal or on foot. Almost all military operations have been along the province's only motorable roads in the valleys of the Darya-ye Konar and its two main tributaries: the Landay Sind (or Bashgal) and the Darreh-ye Pich:

- The Darya-ye Konar flows through the southern part of the province roughly paralleling the Afghan-Pakistani border after entering Afghanistan near Barikowt. Before the war, about half the population—predominantly Pushtun—lived in the Konar valley. Much of Konarha's population has since fled to Pakistan. Asadabad, the provincial capital, and Asmar, the main military base about 30 kilometers to the north, are located on the Darya-ye Konar's banks.
- The Darreh-ye Landay Sind roughly parallels the border in the northern part of the province, joining the Darya-ye Konar near Barikowt. Kamdeysh is the most important town in the valley. About 10 percent of the population—predominantly Nuristanis—lived in this region before the war.
- The Darreh-ye Pich flows east through southern Konarha to Asadabad, located about halfway between Barikowt and the province's southern border. The valley contained about a fourth of the province's population before the war.

Konarha's main importance to the insurgents is probably symbolic—the resistance began in Konarha and had some of its greatest victories there early in the war. Islamic fundamentalist resistance broke out in the Pich valley in December 1977,

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After the Communist coup in

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Kabul the following April, tribesmen in the Landay Sind valley also rose against the government. By autumn, fighting was heavy in the Pich valley, insurgents had seized most of the Landay Sind, and some insurgents were active in the Konar valley.

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The arrival of two regiments from Kabul in late 1978 to support the Afghan regime's mountain brigade permanently stationed at Asmar enabled the government to clear the Landay Sind valley in January 1979, but an effort to strengthen control in the Pich valley failed the following month. Despite heavy air attacks that destroyed many villages and parts of Kamdeysh, in March and April insurgents forced government forces to withdraw from the Landay Sind valley. Our examination

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reveals no subsequent military ground activity in northern Konarha.

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Government forces also retreated from the Pich valley, and by April 1979 insurgents were besieging posts in the Konar valley. Insurgent pressure mounted during the summer, and on 20 August the brigade at Asmar mutinied and surrendered. Rivalry between Pushtuns and Nuristanis, differences between the insurgents and defectors from Asmar, and an inability to block resupply by air prevented insurgents from carrying out plans to take Asadabad and Barikowt,

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